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## **Informed Consent for Psychotherapy**

I want to thank you for your interest in joining me in this journey. My primary aim for your first visit is to get to know you, determine your counseling needs, and help you feel comfortable. I am licensed by the Texas State Board of Examiners for Professional Counseling. My educational training was completed at St. Edward's University where I earned a Master of Arts in Counseling. During graduate school and prior to private practice, I worked at North Austin Urology, a urologist's private practice in Round Rock, Texas. I was fortunate enough to have a second practicum site as well at St. Catherine of Siena Catholic Church. It was at that site that I gained group therapy experience and co-facilitated a cancer support group. I work collaboratively with both individuals, couples, and families of all configurations. I have completed Level II of John Gottman's training and use his method in my work with couples. I'm also trained in EMDR (Eye Movement Desensitization Reprocessing) which is helpful in treating trauma, anxiety, phobias, and more. The purpose of this document is to introduce you to the way I conduct therapy, your rights as a client, limits to confidentiality, and policies. Please honestly share any questions and concerns you may have.

*(Please note: the terms counseling and therapy are used interchangeably in this document.)*

## **Therapeutic Process**

Counseling is a way for you to uncover new information about yourself, your relationships, and deepen your emotional and cognitive awareness. There are many benefits to therapy that can include: gaining new coping skills, deepening emotional experiences, and becoming unstuck in areas of your life. There are also risks associated with engaging in therapy similar to engaging in other types of treatment that deal with personal growth. Therapy has the potential to create some discomfort because we might talk about difficult subjects. It could intensify emotional experiences such as depression and anxiety for periods of time. Therapy also has the potential to alter current relationships as you learn new ways of coping. However, risks associated with therapy are comparable to engaging in other personal growth opportunities.

## **Initial Intake Session**

Prior to our first session, you will be asked to complete and/or read three forms electronically: 1) the Client Information Form, 2) the Informed Consent, and 3) HIPAA forms. The Client Information Form will help me to understand your presenting concerns. For couples' counseling, I require forms from each person.

In couples' and family counseling, everyone is present for the initial session. After our first session, I like to schedule individual interviews in order to get a better feel of each individual and who they are outside of the relationship. This could be one or multiple sessions, depending on the individual. After these separate sessions, regular sessions will resume. If I see fit, I may recommend individual therapy.

If after discussing your goals or during the course of our work together, I determine that another therapist is better suited to serve your needs, I will discuss this with you and provide referrals.

## **Confidentiality and its Limits**

All of our communications will become part of clinical record which is kept secure, by me, under the guidelines of the Texas State Licensing Board. The information you share with me is confidential and will be released only with written consent by you. However, there are some limits or exceptions to confidentiality where information may be released without your consent. These limits of confidentiality are:

1. when there is imminent (immediate) danger to yourself or others
2. if you disclose knowledge or founded suspicion that a child, disabled adult, or elderly adult are, or has been, abused or neglected
3. if I am ordered to release information by a court of law
4. if you are a minor and your parents or legal guardians request information about your counseling
5. if you disclose sexual contact with another health or mental health care professional.

In cases of imminent danger or child endangerment, the law and professional ethics set protection of life and safety as the highest priority. It is accepted practice in psychotherapy and counseling to consult with other licensed professionals on cases, when necessary to provide the highest level of care. If consultation occurs, your identity will not be revealed.

## In Public

As a sex-positive therapist, I am active in the same communities I serve. It is my belief that clients deserve a knowledgeable, well-versed, and empathetic therapist. It is due to this that I stay professionally involved in the kink and non-monogamous/poly communities in Austin. If you are active in the scene, there will likely come a unique time where we see each other at a social, workshop, lecture, party, etc. I am unable to engage in conversations with clients unless spoken to first. This is the case whether we find ourselves at a public or private event, the grocery store, or a restaurant. This is a way to maintain the client's confidentiality. Please be transparent and honest with me so we can attempt to process any thoughts, questions, or concerns you may have together.

## Fees, Sessions, and Cancellations

I am available Tuesdays, Wednesdays, and Thursdays with daytime hours.

45-minute session:

- Single session for \$200
- Package of 4 sessions for \$760 (saves \$40, making it \$190/session)

*For 2+ people, I gently recommend two sessions (a total of 90 minutes).*

Methods of payment accepted:

- Check (made out to "Samar Poorlakani")
- Cash App (cash.app/\$samarpoorlakani)

I keep a card on file in case of no shows and no communication. In the unlikely event that check funds are insufficient, I will collect the returned check fee charged by my bank.

Scheduling is done at the beginning of a session in order to spend the rest of the time focused on you. If therapy exceeds our allotted time, the modifications in session time will be prorated based on the established fee, and then added to any requests in payment sent. This is a reminder to be respectful of appointments that may be scheduled after yours as well as the therapist's time.

When you schedule an appointment with me, that time is reserved for you. **If you are scheduled for a session and do not attend or fail to give a full 48-hours notice for cancellation, you will be billed the full session fee.** To ensure this policy, I hold all client's credit cards on file and will automatically charge for the session. Any exception to this policy will be determined on a case-to-case basis and should be made in advance.

If you choose to purchase a discounted package of 4 sessions, it must be paid in full upfront. There are **no refunds**. Appointments can be rescheduled as needed with advanced notice, but if you do not attend your appointment or cancel under 48-hours, you forfeit that session.

I do not accept insurance or assist in processing insurance claims. Upon request, I can provide a Superbill (with a Tax ID and NPI number) if you would like to file as “out of network” with your provider.

If you have any concerns about finances, I always encourage you to reach out to me. I reserve a number of spots for sliding scale.

Phone calls exceeding five minutes will also be charged the established fee. The same consideration must be taken into account for email and text.

Fees are subject to change annually. Session rates will not increase for established clients until February 1st of each year.

### **Communication, After Hours Contact, Emergency Numbers**

The best way to contact me is through text and email.

Phone: 512.423.9240

Email: [samar.poorlakani@gmail.com](mailto:samar.poorlakani@gmail.com)

#### *Phone Calls and Voicemail*

I am usually not available by phone, though it is answered by a confidential voicemail. While I do my best to return messages in a timely manner, I cannot guarantee an immediate response. Due to the fluctuating nature of my disability, it may take some time for me to respond. Thank you for understanding.

#### *If You Are Running Late / Tardiness Policy*

Please text or email me if you know ahead of time that you are running late, or if we are a few minutes past the start time of your appointment.

Sufficient time must be allowed for therapy to be productive.

- 10-minutes past start time: I will consider it a no-show if you have not alerted me that you are running late, and the session time will be forfeited.
- 25-minutes past start time: regardless of notification, if you are more than 25-minutes late, the session time will be forfeited.

### *Confidentiality with Electronics and Social Media*

Please note electronic communication is not the time and place for therapy.

I cannot ensure the confidentiality of any form of communication through electronic media (including emails and text messages). If you contact me on a social media platform, even a professional page, I would only respond to invite you to connect with me another way.

Austin Intimate Matters has several social media platforms (Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, LinkedIn, FetLife). These pages are open to and for the community. Clients are welcome to like/follow Austin Intimate Matters on social media, however please be aware that others may assume you use my services. These platforms are not meant to address your work in treatment, nor to schedule/cancel a session, and comments/messages may not be replied to or returned.

While I do my best to reply to (any) messages in a timely manner, I cannot guarantee an immediate response and request that you do not use these methods of communication to discuss therapeutic content and/or request assistance for emergencies.

### *Emergency Contact(s)*

When I am unavailable for an extended time (such as a trip or illness), I will provide you with the name of a colleague to contact when/if necessary, and leave that information on my email auto-reply.

If an emergency arises or if you are in need of immediate assistance, please contact your physician, your nearest emergency room, or contact one of the services listed below:

- 911
- Suicide Hotline: 1.800.273.8255
- Safe Place: 512.267.SAFE (7233)
- Austin-Travis County 24-Hour Hotline: 512.476.4357
- Seton Shoal Creek: 512.324.2000
- Austin State Hospital: 512.452.0381

### *Friendly Reminders / Other Things of Note*

A timer will be used to manage the last 10 minutes of our sessions. There will be three alerts.

- The first alert will come when we have ten minutes remaining. At this point, it is important to start wrapping up the session. I do not wish for anyone to leave feeling rushed.
- The second alert will come with five minutes remaining. It is essential to use the remaining time for concluding thoughts, brief questions/concerns, and any homework assignments.
- The third alert signifies the end of session. If therapy exceeds our allotted time, the additional time will be pro-rated based on the scheduled fee. This is to ensure that we are respectful of my time, as well as any appointments following yours.

In the unlikely event of my death or incapacitation, Josh. K. McAdams, LPC-S, 512.537.3599, is the custodian of your records.

### *Tele-Health*

Due to the pandemic (and as an immunocompromised person myself), tele-health will be the only option for the foreseeable future - for both my safety and my clients'.

I ask that clients arrive for their session in a calm, quiet environment with a stable internet connection. For safety concerns, phone and video calls cannot take place in a moving vehicle, but you are welcome to be mobile so long as the connection is strong and clear. Please keep this in mind when you book your sessions, making sure you'll be somewhere quiet and private.

### **Risks and Benefits of Therapy**

People seek counseling to improve aspects of their lives, solve problems, or express their feelings to an accepting person. However, there are risks to therapy that I'd like you to be aware of. Talking about difficult situations or feelings, including trauma or abuse, will potentially be upsetting. Although people generally feel better after some counseling, at first you may experience more intense or uncomfortable feelings. Change in the dynamics of relationships is a common goal of therapy, however, not all relationship members may agree, and this might cause conflict. Discussing your feelings in therapy is an important part of your growth and of ultimately turning these risks into benefits.

How long it takes to see results in therapy is dependent on your willingness to make changes in your behavior, thoughts, and feelings; your willingness to complete any homework that is assigned; and the complicated interactions between you, your family influences, and societal stressors. It is not unusual for the original therapy goals to be

modified as counseling proceeds, which may affect the length of therapy. Some clients find the ongoing support and acceptance in the therapeutic relationship to be helpful in their lives. They may request long term therapy. There are no guarantees as to the outcome of counseling. It is important that you assume ultimate responsibility for your own growth and change.

### **Consent for Therapy and Termination**

Your counseling is voluntary and can be stopped at any time if you desire. If you have concerns, please discuss these with me and we can work together to rectify your concerns or end your counseling. Therapeutically, it is best for you to experience a planned ending to your treatment.

### **Reporting Violations**

Disclosure of the following information for reporting violations is required by the Texas State Board of examiners. For complaints or reports against a Licensed Professional Counselor, please contact: Complaints Management and Investigative Section, P.O. Box 141369, Austin, Texas 78714-1369, 1-800-942-5540.

I have read this document, Informed Consent for Psychotherapy, and by signing electronically, I agree to the policies stated and request that counseling proceed. I understand that counseling is voluntary and can be terminated at any time. I also agree to ask questions, if needed, for clarification.

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*Thank you for choosing me to walk with you on your path toward greater satisfaction and happiness in your life. It is my honor and privilege.*